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With a Policeman In South Africa

or

Three Years in the Natal Mounted Police

A TRUE NARRATIVE

BY AN EX-TROOPER

E. W. SEARLE

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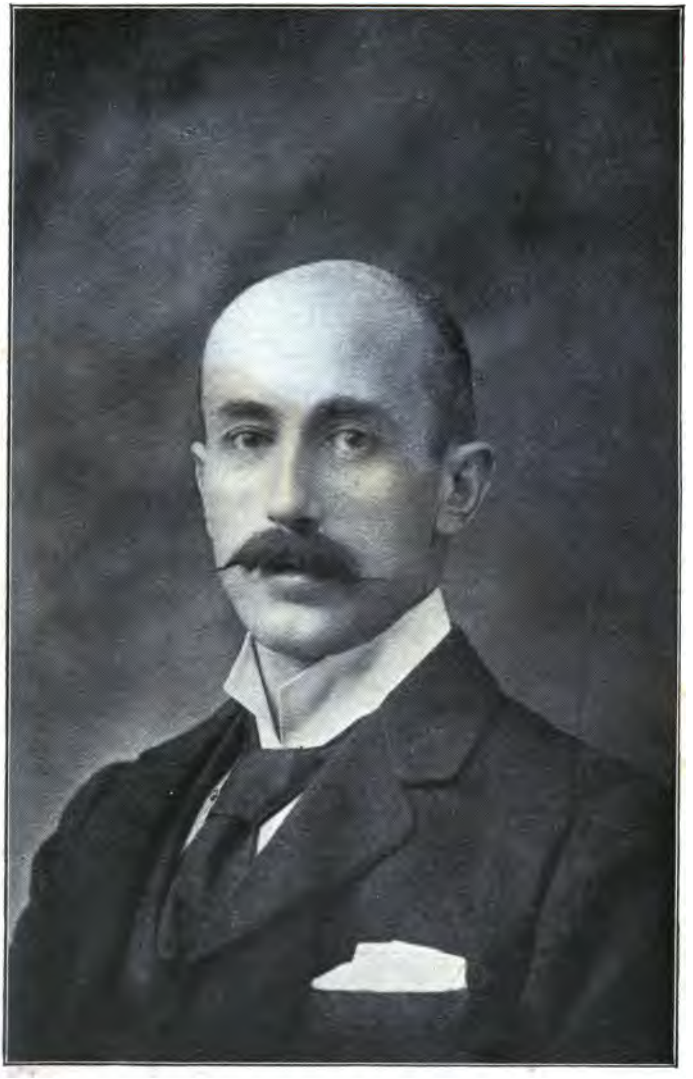

E. W. SEARLE.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

Mr. Ernest Searle, the author of this true narrative, was born in India, of Anglo-Scotch parentage and of a good military stock. He was educated at Tunbridge Wells, England, the Edinburgh Academy and 'Varsity of that modern Athens, finishing his studies in London and Paris. Being intended for a military career at the early age of seventeen he passed successfully, at his first attempt, the preliminary examination for the military college, but preferring to "cure rather than kill" he turned his attention to the medical profession and passed the preliminary therein, also successfully. Insufficiency of funds, however, caused him to leave the parental roof from whence he decided to travel abroad. These travels extended throughout the world and covered a period of twenty years; thus completing the practical part of his education and thereby fitting him in the best possible way for a writer of narrative and fiction. He knows well North, South, and East Africa; also India and Ceylon, Australia, Tasmania and New Zealand, having ridden and walked over many a league of these countries; and on several occasions has run the risk of his life through shipwreck and fire, flood, famine and wild beasts, while at other times by saving the lives of others. He has acquired much information in each place, and has added to his knowledge of several modern languages, some half-dozen other African and Indian dialects. His varied occupations in life too have the great charm of novelty as diverging from the

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conventionalities of Great Britain to the wild life of Africa, thence to the luxurious languor of India, where he joined a large cotton firm with prospects therein secured to him through his relationship to the head of the business, of a rapid rise to the pampered serfdom of position and wealth. Not so eager, however, to amass a fortune as to gain a knowledge of Nature as found in the unexplored wilds of this beautiful world, our young author went to Australia, where he stayed over thirteen years, undergoing every vicissitude of colonial life incidental to gold-mining and sheep-station life up country, also to that of a commercial traveller and business manager's existence down country, only to lose almost his all, at the time of the Australian land boom! Returning at last to England an exile after twenty years and not finding there a sufficiency of "elbow-room," Mr. Searle decided to settle down in the United States, where the greater expanse of territory and more progressive ways of the people, are entirely suitable to his independent ideas of life and literary calling.

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With a Policeman in South Africa.

CHAPTER I.

My Preparation and Departure for Africa—"Say Au Revoir" to Albion's Shores—Outward Bound.

HAVING failed the second time to pass the competitive examination for admission to the Royal Military College, Sandhurst, and hearing that the Natal Government Agent was enlisting men for the Mounted Police there, I, Ernest Richards, resolved at once to join the corps, if possible, and try my luck in South Africa. Consequently I called at the Natal agent's office, sent in my name and, being admitted, was duly questioned as to my age, height, riding-weight and other matters, to all of which queries my replies being considered satisfactory, I was instructed as to filling in an official form in writing, signed it, and with

a number of other candidates arranged to start by the first available vessel, the Warwick Castle, of Donald Curries line.

I noticed that the men who could ride and shoot and were of light, wiry physique, were preferred, though among my future companions there turned out to be several who had never handled a gun or horse before, but having plenty of cheek to "lie like fun" were taken on all right.

With no instructions as to outfit, beyond being advised, in a friendly way, by the agent to take as little as possible, just boots and light underclothing, I would have bought scarcely anything new, had it been left to me. However, my poor old father, a retired Anglo-Indian officer and a major-general in rank, insisted upon buying me hats for the sun, gaiters for the rain, riding-boots *ad lib.*, putties, revolvers, cummerbands, pocket-filters, cholera belts, tobacco, pipes, and clothing galore; all of which, I must say, were more bother than they were worth, and I grieve to relate that,

with the exception of the tobacco and pipes, the rest were speedily turned into cash, at an auction sale held on board our ship during its outward voyage. The last transaction turned out to be a wise one, as the Durban custom house officials were, I found out, to be much dreaded at that time; their zeal being so great and their wisdom so infinite that almost every new arrival was dropped upon for something dutiable; and once your boxes get left in bond, you may wait till "old age doth o'er you creep," before seeing them again; and lucky if you get them even then.

At last my four trunks and a hat box were ready, not forgetting an umbrella. Alas! what recollections do the two last-named articles bring to me, of a game of cricket with them on deck, in the Bay of Biscay! Oh! My top hat and its box each served in turn as cricket ball, with my silk umbrella as the bat With what rapidity did such baggage finally disappear and give place to the serviceable cavalryman's kit of light marching order!

Ah well! how grateful after all ought we young people to be for even the over anxiety of our dear old folk at home! Some such thoughts as these, coupled with my wondering as to when next I should see old England again, flitted through my mind, as the vessel steamed slowly out of the East India docks bound for "Afric's sunny fountains."

The Voyage and My Companions.

CHAPTER II.

The Voyage and my Companions—Fatal End to a Practical Joke—Madeira Island and an Exciting Time on Shore—Bay of Biscay—Canary Isles—St. Helena and Table Bay.

THE second-class accommodation of the Warwick Castle, wherein I was a passenger, was fairly good, and the vessel not half such a bad old tub after all, well seasoned as to timber and time, judging from the creaking and groaning, also from the slow but sure voyage she made. My cabin consisted of three bunks, one of them running lengthways and the other two amidships, one above the other; and, as luck would have it, mine was the top one. Any male ocean-voyager will, of course, understand my being lucky in securing a top berth, instead of a lower one; especially so if you are in the latter and your top berth companion be a bad sailor, and has the only porthole in your

cabin closed. Of the other two occupants one was, like myself, on his way out to join the Natal Mounted Police, while the third was an Italian.

Partly because we could not catch on to the right pronunciation of his long name and partly for want of a better, though not a shorter one, my comrade and I, with the easy familiarity of youth, quickly nicknamed our foreigner Italiano Icecreamo; addressing him alternately by one or the other cognomen, either of which appeared to delight him greatly. Doubtless the fact of Italiano's evanescent smile at his new name was accounted for by his complete ignorance of English as it is spoken, otherwise he would not have looked so pleasant.

Poor Italiano caused us much amusement by his peculiar ideas and habits. He had the Continental aversion of his class to fresh air and water; and, although his bunk commanded the only porthole in our cabin, he kept it tightly screwed, until my other companion

and I, directly the weather became warmer, suggested and suggested, then remonstrated, and finally opened it *pro bono publico*. I shall never forget Italiano one night, pointing to his feet and the open port, while gesticulating excitedly; but as my "stable companion" and I merely grinned at him, he muttered *santissima Maria* and produced a carpet bag, out of which he took and put on three pairs of thick socks, placed his feet in the bag, dragged up his bedclothes and resigned himself to a snoring slumber.

It is needless to relate that we soon broke in our foreign acquaintance to our British ideas, while the voyage lasted; though whether he blessed or cursed us inwardly, I cannot say, as his smiles at the way we used up all the fresh water from his *carafe* pointed rather to his gratitude for small mercies than otherwise.

After leaving Gravesend our steamer touched at Dartmouth, where photos of our vessel, as it lay there, were brought on board for sale. Dartmouth, to my eyes, seemed a

lovely snug spot and typical of English coast scenery. My English cabin acquaintance and I were rowed ashore in a small boat, in the pale moonlight, and having had a general "fly round," we bought a few necessaries, and got back to our bunks and slept the sleep of youth.

Leaving Dartmouth the following morning, our vessel made for Madeira, at the rate of two hundred and ninety-five miles every twenty-four hours, and reached it in four days' time, or just a week out from London. The Bay of Biscay, being as calm as a mill pond, of course helped towards so quick a run. Arrived at Madeira, where the ship had three hours for coaling, I went on shore with a party of nine other lively young bloods. On landing, two guides tacked on to us and showed us the cathedral, the "bazaars" and fruit market, also several wine shops. Of course most of our party required to sample the far-famed Madeira wines, so we all drank quite innocently and freely of the various brands of the island sherries and other concoctions sold as

such—the after-result of which, especially next morning after the vessel had again started, being most deplorable.

What madcaps we all were, when I come to think of it, directly we got out of the heated wine saloons into the fresh air. We acted, with true British instinct, as if we owned the town, and certainly did our utmost to paint it red; much to the disgust of the local Portuguese and other peaceful citizens there. Madeira boasts of few horses, if any; the general means of conveyance consists of carts without wheels, like sledges, and drawn by bullocks. Our crowd made the most of our new mode of transport by belaboring the wretched bullocks and Portuguese alternately; causing thereby several rows between the local constabulary and ourselves, and ended in our upsetting one or two of the miniature policemen and sentries who were tackling us; although finally, we had to double back to the beach, from whence we got into some of the surf boats and were rowed towards our floating home, the good ship

Warwick Castle. En route to our vessel the Portuguese rowers wanted double fare from us, and stopped rowing for us to give it them. Our party refused to pay more, whereupon the rowers tried to turn the boat's head shorewards once more; but one of my companions and I seized a boatman apiece and shaking our fists in their faces, threatened to pitch them overboard if they did not row us straight to the vessel. The Portuguese boatmen appeared to understand, and muttering to each other, smilingly resumed rowing as we wished; but suddenly threw an oar each into the sea, while they themselves simultaneously slipped over the side. We were thus left rather awkwardly placed, minus oars, added to which our quondam boatmen, who were now well out of reach and quite at home in the sea, kept calling out to other boatmen, evidently friends of theirs, to row into us and capsize us, if possible.

We happened to have some sugar canes belonging to one of the party, who had bought

them on shore; so armed with these we prepared for a fight, in case any others of the Portuguese should come on, but they didn't do so, not liking the look of us somehow. We then waved to a boat's crew of tars, who were rowing to the shore, and coming up to us stopped for our explanation; ultimately, they towed us to our vessel, and for the fun of the thing, after we had all got safely upon deck again, they turned the Portuguese boat upside down and laughingly went on their way, leaving it to float about as it might.

Life on our ship was never really so monotonous as such voyages usually are, owing, in our case, to the very lively and mixed crowd of passengers we had on board: Jews and Gentiles, Kimberley diamond-fields men and Australian gold diggers, emigrants from England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales, and Continentals from Italy, Greece and Germany. Then, for amusements, we had cricket, quoits and sports in the daytime, succeeded by songs, dances, theatricals and cards, mostly Napoleon,

whist and euchre at night. Of course, we had the usual mock trial by jury, also sweepstakes, as to the ship's run made every twenty-four hours, and endless practical jokes daily, and while crossing the line.

By the by, talking of these last, which I for one did not approve of and so refrained from joining in with, reminds me of the reason why, nowadays, the old-time jokes, as practised upon passengers crossing into the tropics for the first time, are quite done away with. It happened this-wise, that, on one of the mail boats, a certain passenger, on being told by the other voyagers that he would have to undergo the sailors' jokes in due course, warned some of his fellow-passengers that he would not allow of any such being practised on him, whatever they might do to others.

Consequently upon the same day the vessel in question was crossing the line, the passenger referred to, in order to avoid Neptune's jokes, of shaving and ducking people, retired to his cabin and closed the door. Hearing, however.

great laughter, followed by a loud knock at the door of his cabin, he seized hold of a loaded revolver he always carried about with him when travelling and, without opening the door, enquired as to what was wanted of him. Upon being requested, in Neptune's name, to come out, the solitary passenger refused and drew back with revolver presented at the door, which latter was then burst in by a noisy crowd of sailors and others, all of whom, though warned not to enter, tried to do so, in spite of his threatening to shoot the first one who did so; whereupon, not heeding his threats and still persisting to force an entry, the passenger fired and killed the first man to enter his cabin, to the sudden horror and gravity of the crowd, who quickly rushed away. The sequel to this sad episode was that the passenger was tried and acquitted on the grounds of justifiable homicide, and Neptune's little jokes, on crossing the line, were ever afterwards forbidden on all vessels, to be practised by the ship's hands, at any rate.

I must say that Sundays on board were rather slow, with only the Service at Sea, as read by the captain, to break the monotony. Dolphins and flying fish were seen in plenty, also a few sharks and whales occasionally. The weather was now quite tropical, especially just before and after crossing the equator; the old joke as to the line being a solid one, was raked up again, for the benefit of the simple. The days were much warmer now and ended very suddenly, as they always do in the tropics, through there being little or no twilight. Our vessel was caught in a storm too one night, no joke in equatorial latitudes. First one hears the wind moaning and howling dismally, then the waves become crested with white foam or sea horses, and heavy rain falls, accompanied soon by the loud report of thunderclaps and followed by vivid forked or sheet lightning. The sea looks a dreary, weird sketch in black and white, the trough of the waves inky, with their summits by contrast so snowy. The wonder is that on such occasions, the man on watch

ever manages to see all clear ahead, by merely peering into the murky and pitch-black darkness of the night.

How small one feels at such times, when thinking of the few planks that alone divide us between life and death—and what a death! for, in spite of rumor stating that such is the easiest to die, I for one don't fancy it much in preference to so many other deaths of a more comfortable kind! What with the terrible loneliness of the "weary waste of waters," the intense cold and the miserable uncertainty of whether the world at large, and apart even from one's people, will ever learn the fate of the missing ship, much less the cause of its being lost, with all hands at sea; such, added to one's gruesome recollections of tales read about buried ships ten thousand fathoms deep, dead men's bones, derelicts and Davy Jones's locker, all tend to make one shudder, to say the least of it, at the very thought of a watery grave. The latter may seem easy enough to those on land who, sitting snugly ensconed by

their own fireside, can well afford to theorize, but not to those men who travel the seas in strange boats.

After the tropical storm, which generally passes off as quickly as it comes, we experienced calm seas and hot weather. The latter caused some sickness and much drinking among the passengers. For my own part, my Madeira experience of a headache taught me that "once bit, twice shy," so I kept off all liquors, confining myself to lemon-squashes, quinine tonic waters and such harmless thirst-quenchers.

We passed, after the Bay of Biscay, a few islands, Madeira and the Canaries, then later on Ascension and, while nearing the Cape, St. Helena, the well-known island of exile for Napoleon and others since him. After a smooth, uneventful run down the west coast of Africa, we at last sighted Cape Town, on the eleventh of May, some four days inside of a month since leaving old Albion's shores.

"DURBAN, THE PORT OF NATAL."—Page 25.

Cape Town.

CHAPTER III.

Cape Town and its many Colored Population—Lion's Head Mount—"Up-a-Tree" Incident—Sea Bathing and Shark Adventure—Transshipping for Durban —"Puffy"—Scenery en route to the Capital.

WHAT a fine appearance Cape Town has from the bay, with its Lion's Head on Table Mountain, keeping silent guard over the town, such an air of British dignity and possession about it all! The town itself is a busy one, though the older streets and houses, built on Dutch lines, first impressed me as being cramped and antiquated, and the thoroughfares unevenly paved.

Prior to my having to transship to another vessel, leaving for Durban in three days' time, I went on shore daily, but returned to the Warwick Castle each night. Hence, I saw most of the town, with its fine botanical gardens and museum, and drove out and about the pretty

suburbs, that were around the mountain's foot, such as Wynberg, Constantia, Stellenbosch, Somerset East and West, Rondebusch, Sea Point, Green Point, Kalk Bay and other pleasant spots. It was very warm and mosquitoes plentiful.

Fruit, however, was to be had in abundance —such fruit! superb grapes at four pence per pound, pears, melons, naartjes, peaches, pomegranates, and a host of others too numerous to mention.

There were some good hotels also, where I tasted several Dutch dishes, quite new to me and certainly very palatable.

The people, too—what a strange lot! A black and white and various-hued crowd, composed of swells and tramps, Gentiles and Jews, old, young and middle-aged, the schoolboy and old stager, the clever man and the utter fool, business men and farmers, miners and adventurers, and, as some one once so aptly described the crowd at the first Kimberley diamond fields rush, thus:

Cape Town.

"Australians—Yanks were to the fore,
The old experienced digger;
That slow-going coach, the festive Boer,
The Coolie, Tottie, Nigger."

While at Cape Town those of our passengers bound for Natal, though hunting in couples during the day, all met on board nightly and compared notes as to our doings on shore. Among other adventures my fellow-companion and I met with two rather exciting episodes, the one very ludicrous and the other rather serious.

The first happened on Table Mountain, which my friend and I determined to climb. While resting on our way up the side of the hill, we sighted some native huts, about two hundred yards off, and out of which there suddenly dashed at us a couple of huge, fierce looking mastiffs, that at once recalling to our minds visions of the bloodhounds in Uncle Tom's Cabin, and other books on slavery, caused us both to climb the handiest tree, and none too

soon either, considering the big, vicious brutes glaring at us from below. We were certainly up a tree, for once in our lives, and not inclined to come down either till the dogs left. This they did soon after we had hollered to some Kafirs, who, seeing our awkward predicament, called the savage looking beasts away. We then pursued our way to the summit of the Lion's Head, from which height, owing to its being a fine, clear day, we got a view of the town and harbor below and the surrounding scenery. It is needless to say that we did not return the same way by which we came, preferring instead another one that enabled us to give our canine terrors a wide berth.

Our second adventure was caused by a shark, while bathing in the harbor below. After our rapid descent of Table Mountain, my friend and I feeling very warm, and the sea looking invitingly cool, we hired a small, open boat from an English-speaking Kafir and got him to row us out a fair distance to sea—into which we plunged, and swam about, enjoying our-

selves in the cool and briny ocean. All at once our Kafir oarsman stood up in the boat and pointed out excitedly in our direction, yelling out that there was a shark!—a shark! We both turned our heads quickly and certainly saw a fin, some fifty yards behind us and making rapidly in our direction; whereupon we swam all we knew, in the way of speed, for our boat, which the Kafir had the sense to row towards us and helped to drag us both in, directly we reached it. This latter we did, with not a moment to lose, as we all three could testify when we saw a tremendous shark, a bluish looking fellow, darting along the surface close to our boat, swim leisurely away, on finding itself just balked, when so near its prey. I assure you we both considered ourselves lucky, and vowed we would never bathe in the open sea again, if we could help it—not in tropical waters, anyhow—after so narrow a squeak.

After this we got back to our ship, and from there were transshipped to the Melrose, a coaster, that carried us on to the port of Natal,

Durban. We were met here by the sergeant-major of the Natal Mounted Police, who came off in a tug and took us off the Melrose and on to the shore to the St. George Hotel, where we had dinner, and afterwards wandered round the town, returning in time to catch a train for Pietermaritzburg, the capital of Natal, and the headquarters of the Natal Mounted Police. I thought the scenery between Durban and Pietermaritzburg very fine; the African mountains being quite different to what I had seen in Scotland and elsewhere, far grander in fact, and without the gloominess and greenness of other similar ranges, being of a brighter and bronzier hue, with a further-off look about them; the tops too were much more fantastically picturesque and not so monotonous in their rugged outlines as in the peaks met with in the home country. Our sergeant-major, whom we afterwards learnt was nicknamed Puffy, from his paunchy appearance, was an old Canterbury-Depot man and a very smart soldier in every sense of the word, and very well liked

by the officers and men. He was a married man, and a real good-hearted British soldier, not over well educated, but fond of argument and a staunch imperialist, and keenly alive to any slur cast upon the army, and his own mounted corps in particular. As quick to forgive as to take offence, and with a heart like a child's, though as brave as a lion, he was a typical ranker of the good old school. So long as a man was smart, and did his work, while on duty, the sergeant-major never interfered with him afterwards. His ideas of education, or book learning, as he termed it, were not very high ones, and consisted more of being able to drill, drink and damn like a trooper, than of anything else. Woe to the unfortunate recruit who was too fastidious, or slow and slovenly, after having been shown his work once or twice! Be he pot boy or prince, it was all one with Puffy, and though, doubtless, very disagreeable to the wretched delinquent, upon whom Puffy's wrath descended, the latter's sallies caused not only those in the ranks,

but officers and onlookers, to roar with laughter. However, of Puffy's barrack and riding-school sayings more anon.

Arrived at the Pietermaritzburg railway station we were met there by a corporal, from the barracks hard by, who conducted us all there to our quarters. After supper and a smoke we were allotted a bell-tent, for every two recruits, and left to turn into our camp beds therein for the night. My late fellow-shipmate and I managed to get in the same tent, the furnishings of which we were not long in investigating, consisting as they did of two old iron camp bedsteads, with their accompanying straw mattresses and bolsters, also two dark brown blankets to each bed, with nothing else but the bare tent pole, supporting the canvas above and around us. Several of the old hands, however, soon came in, just to have a look at us, and offered us a bit of candle, matches, a tin pannikin to drink out of, and a square inch or two of broken looking-glass, all of which we gratefully accepted, re-

turning the compliment by letting them help themselves to the latest English brands of tobacco contained in our pouches. We smoked and yarned, and turned in directly the "lights-out bugle" sounded, then smoked, and yarned again till our comrades left us, one by one, and we fell asleep, at last, to dream of the morrow and the new life before us.

CHAPTER IV.

Pietermaritzburg—"Swearing in"—Drink Drill and Discipline—"Square-face"—"Cape Smoke" and "Kafir Rum"—On "Mufti Pass"—Details of Police Life—"Remount Fund" and "Commandant's Debt"—"Smasher" Hats—"Canteens."

THE next day happened to be a Sunday, and consequently, as we were unable to be sworn in until the Monday following, we had nothing to do, except eat and drink, smoke and yarn and take a look around our new quarters and the town of Pietermaritzburg. The latter I shall not describe in detail, except to say that it is a fair-sized and well populated town, with wide streets and some very passable churches, hotels, theatres, banks, shops and other buildings. There is also a park and cricket ground combined, a river and a race course, a market square and a military camp; so taking the place altogether it is a very pretty, well-to-do and

"GRAVES OF BRITISH KILLED AT LANG'S NEK."—Page 34.

progressive Anglo-Colonial town. The bulk of the people, in and around the town itself, are dependent, mostly, upon the outside settlers, who consist, more or less, of a steady class of well-educated British farmers. These latter unlike their sister Cape colonists, are intermixed with but very few of the Dutch, whom they dislike for their non-progressiveness and continual boasting of their defeat of a few brave English under General Colley at Lang's Nek.

Our barracks were well built and healthy, with plenty of accommodation for a light cavalry corps, like ours was practically. Among the old hands here I met several school and college friends of mine, all of whom, failing through various causes to follow out their particular bent in life, were sent out by their relatives to try and sow their wild oats, by the help of Time and Colonial experience. The result of such erratic notions, on the part of the old folk at home, being that the cure was often worse than the disease, and especially with regard to drinking, in which most of those

who were addicted to it went from bad to worse. Certainly the strict military discipline, as maintained in the Natal Mounted Police, combined with the firm, but kind hand of the officers therein, kept many hardened cases together for a while—but alas! not for long! as these would break out again and again, and if on duty they were punished repeatedly, until proved incorrigible, and finally their most patient commandant would be compelled to dismiss them from the corps, minus a discharge. If a man wants drink he can get it in the Colonies, as easily as at home, with the disadvantage, too, of its being far worse in quality, and more harmful. The hot climate, and absence of old country surroundings, combined with the free and easy style of colonial conditions of life being far more conducive to fostering such intemperate habits, are the real causes of there being so many cases of decent young fellows who, to the great surprise and maudlin regret of their people at home, instead of turning over the expected "new leaf" abroad, if ever

they do return home, are much worse than before.

In Natal, "square-face," or unsweetened gin (J. D. K. Z.), is the liquor universally drank, and is really the most wholesome, as such drinks go. The "Cape Smoke" and "Kafir Rum" are vile concoctions, and really most injurious liquors; their main ingredients are popularly said to be composed of kerosene and carbolic sheep-dip oil, warranted to burn up anyone's inside, in less than six months. The Kafirs and Hottentots are, however, about the only ones who drink it often; the white men tackle it seldom, and then merely for want of anything better.

The Natal Mounted Police is by no means a teetotal corps, and though most of us drank a little, rather too much on special occasions, such as at Christmas or New Year, and on the meeting of old comrades from the distant "out-stations," we were, as a body of men, a fairly abstemious lot all round. It is certainly not through the want of good advice from the

commandant and his officers, that any newly-joined recruit need drink, for, if anything at all, they are against it. However, not being a temperance lecturer, let me get back to other matters!

The next day, being Monday, we rose at the sound of the "reveille" bugle-call, and after breakfast were taken downtown by Puffy, to a magistrate, before whom we were all duly sworn in, to serve our Queen and Natal for three years in the Natal Mounted Police. Our pay of six shillings per diem, as second class troopers, started from the day we were sworn in, and continued thus for the first year, rising to seven shillings daily, during the second and third years' service, when we were called first-class troopers; at the end of which period, if we re-engaged for another three years, we received an extra sixpence, or seven shillings and sixpence per diem, for the fourth, fifth and sixth years.

If a man desires to leave the corps at any time he can do so, by paying ten pounds for each

year's service of the three still unexpired, or, in other words, he can buy his discharge thus: if desirous of leaving the Natal Mounted Police during his first year of service, he must pay thirty pounds (purchase money); if during the second year, twenty pounds, and ten pounds in his third, or last year, of the three he was sworn in for. One can rise, if considered satisfactory enough by the officers for promotion, from the lowest rank of second class trooper to a commissioned officer, as sub-inspector, inspector, and so on, similarly to the army. The two last ranks correspond to a captain and major in the imperial service, and, if anything, rather better, owing to lesser messing and other expenses in living.

To those not aspiring to rank as commissioned officers, preferring, on remunerative grounds, to remain in the ranks as "non-coms," or even as troopers, there are many well paid and snug billets open, such as jailers, court messengers, and chief constableships. A jailer gets about one hundred and fifty pounds a year,

plus other small commissions; court orderlies, or messengers, draw eighty pounds yearly, added to very considerably by fees for serving summonses, etc., amounting in many cases to three or four hundred pounds yearly. The corps consists of some seven hundred men, divided into "troops" of about fifty men, and small lots of some three to six men, called "detachments." The latter occupy the "out-stations," and are in charge of a corporal, or sergeant, and occasionally under a first class trooper, as a rule a rejoined or second three-year man. A troop is generally under the command of a sub-inspector, or inspector, and stationed in the larger up-country towns.

Every recruit, on first joining, is provided with a horse, saddlery, clothing and equipment, the whole thing costing him from thirty-five to forty pounds, and is stopped out of his pay, at the rate of two pounds per month, till the debt is cleared off. On getting his discharge, at the expiration of his three years' enlistment, a man's uniform and kit, also his horse and

saddlery, belong to him entirely, provided, of course, that his commandant's debt is paid off; otherwise whatever may be still due is deducted from the sale of his horse, etc., and the balance, if any, handed over to him, on leaving the corps. In the former case—if he is out of debt—he usually sells his uniform and horse back into the corps, and the saddlery to outside civilians, who give him a better price as a rule. There is a Remount Fund, to which every trooper and "non-com" pays three shillings monthly, as an insurance premium against the death of his horse, the original cost of the animal to the trooper being in such an event repaid him out of this fund. Some of the "old hands" become so habituated and like the life in the corps so much, that they never want to leave it, preferring rather to live and die in it; and to insure their never being turned out of it, manage to keep their commandant's debt always going—in short, never get out of arrears. How long these walking advertisements of Natal Mounted Police "esprit de

corps" do actually hang on is still a mystery to me!

At first I was drilled with other recruits, some three and four times daily, going through foot and carbine, and formation drills, till I knew them thoroughly; then we were taught riding school, and shooting at targets and volley firing. Our arms belonged to the Colonial Government, and consisted of a carbine and a revolver. Our uniform was of dark blue cloth, with black facings, and soft "smasher" hat to match, with riding boots and spurs to complete the whole "rig out."

How proud we were when out on leave in the town! The place seemed too small to hold us, and what with our clanking spurs and cavalry step and swagger we really quite fancied ourselves. When we entered a bar, too, with what an air of owning everything in the place did we call for drinks and cigars, even though we were "beastly short of cash, don't you know," an event that I grieve to say was more the rule than the exception! To look at us a

casual Londoner would have mistaken us for military officers, met for a "jolly good spree," so nonchalant and *blasé* a Piccadilly air did most of us enjoy; probably from the fact that most of us were gentlemen, hailing from those parts. Money was no object to us whatever it might have been to the hotel keeper and others, especially whenever we could get credit, an occurrence that often happened. "Pay you again, old boy," and "Stick it down to me, old chap," were our favorite ways of "working the oracle" and squaring the hotel keeper, or his bar-man, *pro tem,* after first emptying our glasses. I must say that, in most cases, although the Natal Mounted Police are exempt from legal action for debts up to thirty pounds, we always paid up our previous scores, when we did draw our next month's pay.

Some, of course, never did pay, being in a perpetual state of debt, but these became well known to the hotel and store keepers, and did

not cause much loss to such business people, and, in any case, the profit made out of the good customers paid for the loss on the bad ones.

"AN OUTSTATION GROUP; OR, COMRADES ALL."—Page 45.

CHAPTER V.

The "Veldt" Riding School—"Pink-Eye"—Skirmishing—A "Devil-may-care" Ride"—"New Chums"—Spurs and "Gravel-smashers"—The "Long and Short" of it—"Heavy Marching Order"—Off at Last.

THE weather was still rather warm, during March, this part of the year being the dry end of the summer season in Natal. In April it began to get cooler, but nothing unbearable; in fact the climate at its coolest was warm and dry, and, judged by other parts, is one of the finest in the world.

It was about this time that, with others, I was considered ready to start Riding School; so was allowed to pick a horse out of a troop of them, driven one day into the barracks helter skelter. Fortunately for me I secured a nice looking beast, a flea-bitten grey—this color being a very serviceable one for South

Africa, though harder to keep clean than the darker shades. I called my horse Rover, as he had a knack, when I first stabled him, of slipping his head stall and wandering out of barracks, "on his own," a habit I soon checked by altering his head fastenings.

There were two batches of men to be drilled in the Riding School; the best riders were placed in the first ride, and the others in the second. I was in the latter, though really fit to be with the first lot. However, my modesty stood me in good stead, when I saw how severe the riding tests were, the style being so different to the cross country riding of the civilian. Just as I was improving rapidly my horse died of horse sickness, or "pink-eye," a disease very prevalent in South Africa, and nearly always deadly. The Remount Fund came in here very handily, as it supplied me with a fresh horse of same value.

Our Riding School was situated a few miles from the barracks, and consisted of a circular track on the open "veldt." We were out twice

daily and taught the various evolutions at a walk, trot, and gallop, with stirrups and with them crossed over the saddle in front of us; also without spurs. From this we got to jumping over bush hurdles and mud walls, in single file, in pairs and fours abreast, with and without stirrups, and ultimately with spurs. Our horses were then trained to stand still while under fire—the latter consisted of a carbine loaded with blank cartridge being fired close to the horse's body, around, under it and between its hind legs. Such treatment caused the horses to rear and kick, and took us all our time to keep seated; the penalty of becoming unhorsed was that we were put back for the next new squad, and thus delayed us in going up-country, the latter event being the main object of our severe course of training in the Riding School and barracks.

Once passed as efficient, we put in the time awaiting our "up-country" marching orders by target practice, with carbine and revolver; then on foot and mounted we skirmished about

the "veldt," as mounted infantry, in a series of sham fights, taking refuge behind ant-bear heaps, and other cover, while potting at the imaginary enemy with blank cartridge.

I shall never forget our last ride, a few days before we left Pietermaritzburg, to join our several troops and detachments up-country. It was a clear, starry morning when the bugle sounded the reveille, then the "boot-and-saddle," "fall in," and "march." Emerging in "half-sections" from the barracks, at a walk, no sooner had we proceeded some quarter of a mile, along the well known road leading towards the Veldt Riding School, than the trumpeter was ordered to sound the "trot," which, through inadvertence, or purposely, we took to mean the "gallop," and gallop we all did. Our horses, sniffing the fresh morning air, were only too eager to go the pace, which latter soon became a racing one. Whatever induced our sergeant-major to draw his sword as if about to charge a veritable enemy ahead, I never could quite make out, unless it was that

he was suffering from a "bad head," occasioned by too much canteen conviviality the previous night, and was a bit feverish and excited in consequence. Be that as it may, we young fellows, being about as fresh and lively as our horses and only too ready for a bit of fun, were glad of an excuse to race. We were a lively crowd, and it was very funny to see sixty of us tearing along a wide road leading to the "veldt," with its miles of open country before us. Poor Puffy, seeing how wrongly his orders for the trot had been obeyed, yelled in vain to the trumpeter to sound the "halt," but it was quite useless, as our little bugler's horse had become as excited as the rest, and tore along with bit half-between its teeth, giving its rider all he could do to hold on and guide it, let alone being able to stop it. Away we all went; first one lot in Indian file raced past our gallant sergeant-major, whose yells for them to halt were quite unheeded, and his words barely vociferated before he and his horse were almost knocked over by another lot

of his lively troopers riding, this time, past him in twos and threes abreast, with knees jammed against one another's horses, feet out, stirrups and reins interlaced. No wonder poor Puffy cursed and yelled at us all, as being "a lot of d——d John Gilpins" and "circus riders." I feel quite sure that had we met any real enemy in the shape of Boers and others, they would have fled in terror at our wild appearance alone. How we did enjoy that famous ride! It was about the funniest one I ever experienced. We rode like demons; even Puffy was carried away by it all, *nolens volens*—we were such a devil-may-care lot, and all we seemed to know was that the road to Zululand was ahead, and after that—well—the deluge!

How much further we would have gone I cannot say, if it had not been that thoughts of breakfast made us pull ourselves and horses together, eventually falling into our places and returning to barracks, to all intents and purposes a most orderly looking crowd, in spite

of our bright and grinning young faces, and Puffy's paunchy figure half bursting between suppressed wrath and the necessary outward appearnce of military decorum.

After stables what a breakfast we all ate! as if we would never get filled again, and how we talked and laughed! until our short-lived fun was cut shorter still by the fall-in bugle, and three extra drills that day, by way of Puffy's punishment of us for our early morning's disorderly ride. What a wonder we used to consider Puffy to be in the way of drill energy, once he became annoyed. No matter what kind of a night it was, if Puffy had been over-indulging at the canteen, and had a sore head, he would drop onto the sentry at most unexpected moments, and if anything were amiss would immediately "turn out the guard" and bellow at them all round, followed often by incessant drills next day, of hapless recruits and others, till his temper and head were better again. There is generally a comic side to everything in life, if one can only see it, and

before leaving that "institution" of the Natal Mounted Police, our popular sergeant-major, I cannot refrain from mentioning another funny anecdote about him.

If there was one thing more than another that put Puffy into a rage, it was to see any men roll up to duty next day either sleepy, lazy or only half-recovered from being "on pass" the previous evening down the town.

If such an event did occur, Puffy would strut about like a peacock, very indignant and gradually working himself into a beautiful rage, until he would give vent to some of his wrathful feelings by calling the trumpeter to sound the "fall in," and once on parade it was a case of look out for "squalls." It was so easy to find fault with some unfortunate trooper in the ranks less smart than the others. Puffy would begin then to uncork his bottled-up wrath. On one occasion to a newly joined recruit, straight out from London society life, who was too fastidious over cleaning out his horse's stall and had actually a pair of kid

gloves on, so as not to dirty his fingers, Puffy first snorted, then roared out:

"Now, then, what the devil are you doing with gloves on? Take them off, my fine fellow, take them off; you've got no fine ladies to dance with here, you know. What the devil next? We'd better buy you a feather-bed, my boy, and then you can get married." With the emphasis on the first syllable of the last word ringing in the blushing recruit's ears, it tickled us all immensely, as much from Puffy's voice, as by the absurd sequence of his utterances as to gloves, feather-beds and marriage being mixed up together.

Although turned out now as perfectly well-drilled mounted men, we had not got properly used to walking about with spurs on—the result being evidenced, by most of us, the next morning, after having been "on pass" in town, when putting on our riding boots we noticed great scratches and weals in the leather from

toe to heel and halfway up the calf of each boot. After a while, however, we became quite adepts in walking about in top boots and spurs, without damaging the leather, and in learning to turn our heels out in the neat, clean style so noticeable in all cavalrymen. This is probably the reason the latter are considered, in the army, to be much neater and smarter looking walkers than the infantry, and accounts, doubtless, for these last being called "gravel-smashers" by their mounted comrades.

I remember two of our corps being called the "long and short of it," owing to the size of the taller, a six-footer, in contrast to the much shorter man by his side. Both were great friends and mostly inseparable. They looked very funny out "on leave" together. The taller of the two was a baronet's son, and the other an Oxford graduate and ex-coxswain of his "eight," whom he had steered to victory several times in the great Thames boat race between the two well-known blues.

The "Veldt."

At last our marching orders arrived, and we were not sorry to leave the routine of barracks, with its drills and parades, for the freedom and novelty of "out-station life." Most of the men were to go to Estcourt, some to Greytown, others to Ladysmith; and three others, besides myself, were destined for Fort Pine, a station near the Zulu borders of Natal, some five days' ride from Pietermaritzburg.

We paraded next day therefore in "heavy marching order," which meant carrying all our worldly possessions upon ourselves and horses, and after a parting drink at the canteen, with our barrack comrades and mutual wishes of good luck, we marched out of headquarters en route to our respective destinations.

Our journey to Sterk's Spruit took us all one day, and at Greytown, where we left some of our contingent, we arrived on the following day; then on to Burrups the third day, Umsinga by the fourth, and Fort Pine saw us, safe and sound, by the fifth day.

CHAPTER VI.

An "Up-country Detachment"—Fort Pine—"On Horse-guard"—Burweed Hunting—"Rounding Up" the Natives—A Sunday in Camp—A Police "Gas and Singsong"—"Baby Square-face"—A Rattling Chorus—Spruit Bathing—Water Snake Experience—"Tick," and other pests—Zulu Relics and Burial Rites—Isandlwhana—"Maas" and "Duala"—Kafir-corn and Mealies—The Zulu "at home"—A Lutheran Mission Station.

FORT PINE is situated between Dundee and Newcastle, close to the Orange Free State border, and consists of a quadrangular enclosure in the midst of open "veldt," rather like the Estcourt Mounted Police quarters, though unlike the latter in its surroundings, which are hilly and picturesque.

Our duties here consisted of occasional mounted and other drills, carbine, revolver practice and horseguards. The latter meant driving out, after morning stables, all the troop horses on to the "veldt," where they

"ZULU AT HOME; OR, A CHIEF AND HIS FAMILY."— Page 56.

fed about till near sunset, when the mounted horseguard would round them up, like Australian stockmen, and bring them back to the barrack stables for the night. In the event of the trooper, in charge of the horses, losing any of them, he would be placed under temporary arrest that night, and next day be taken up to the orderly room for an explanation of the matter, before the officer there, and if it was found to be the trooper's fault, half the value of the horse, or horses, would be added to his commandant's debt, the other half being debited to the Remount Fund. While on patrol we would have to search for *zanthium-spinosium,* or burweed, on the farms, and if any were found, the farmer, upon whose place it was growing, would be reported by us to our commanding officer, who had him fined by the magistrate of the district.

It was rather hot work being out the livelong day, in the blazing sun, no trees and no shade, watching the troop of horses to keep them from getting "lost, stolen, or strayed." From

the fort we had to take our turns at going out on "patrol" duty, for days and months at a stretch, according to the distance patrolled. While in barracks we went in for private messing, which cost each man on an average about two pounds monthly.

Sundays in camp were spent quietly enough, as a rule, with the ordinary stable fatigues, sentry and horseguard duties, but without any parades or kit inspections, as on week days. Among other places visited on patrol were Newcastle, Ladysmith, Dorn's Kraal, Umsinga, Dundee and Greytown. We had also to serve summonses and execute warrants, also take a census of the inhabitants and see that the natives paid their hut and dog taxes. The last two duties were not very easy to perform and involved plenty of long, solitary rides, for many of the Kafirs lived away in the mountain passes, in their kraals, which we visited and inspected their receipts for the last payments of the tax. While in camp I picked up a smattering of several trades, such as saddlery and

bootmaking, haircutting and shaving, tailoring and horseshoeing, baking, butchering and cooking. What jolly times we used to have at night after our horses had been tethered and fed for the night, and ourselves snugly ensconced around the camp-fire, under the starry canopy of heaven, with the noise of frogs, crickets and other insect life, so common to the tropics! What long "yarns" or police "gas" we did have! while smoking, varied by "sing-songs" with a rousing chorus. One of these last I remember well was a favorite roar of ours, thus:

"And the parson he'll come too,
With all his canting crew,
D—n his eyes, d—n his eyes, d—n his eyes!"

not quite *à propos* of the home society set most of us had just left. How our very proper if not pious relatives would have been shocked had they but seen and heard their dear "innocent boys," when the spirits moved in the

shape of a "baby square-face" bottle, out of which we took a frequent "nobbler!"

At times, when off barrack duties, several of us would indulge in a walk down to our bathing place, which consisted of a deep hole in a spruit that meandered among rocks and foliage till it joined the Buffalo River. Here in the warm afternoons we would swim about, quite oblivious of snakes and other crawling creatures, although several of us got some unpleasant frights.

On one occasion I was swimming about when, to my horror, I felt my arm touched by something that wriggled around it, in the shape of a large black snake, that caused me to yell aloud while swinging the reptile vigorously on to the bank, where my other comrades were drying and dressing themselves. I can assure you it caused further yelling and a regular stampede, until someone killed the brute.

It is said that snakes cannot bite in the water, and though that particular one in my case did not do so, still I would not like to try the ex-

periment again; the one risk was enough for me.

Of course, on the way back to camp we all got on to "snake yarns" and some very tall "ones" they were; the man to top all asserting, most emphatically as a positive fact, that he once saw a fight between two enormous snakes, each about fifty feet long, which ended ultimately by the disappearance of both, as each one swallowed the other.

We had a fairly well-stocked library, to keep one's mind from ennui and also make us forget the heat, flies and ticks. The last are an intolerable nuisance, to anyone camping out on the "veldt." They are a kind of small crab-like insect, half as big as a lady-bird, that fastens on to one's skin, and burying its head there, sucks its fill of blood, until, becoming swollen out to about the size of a cherry, it drops off at last. If one tries to pull the little beggar off, in nine cases out of ten, its head gets left, the result being, a small sore arises which is rather

hard to heal, especially so if one's blood be at all out of order.

In our walks we used to amuse ourselves also by digging about in some old caves, near by, for the bones of Zulus buried during the Zulu war, and managed to find an occasional skeleton, in a sitting posture, according to the usual custom of Zulu and native burial rites. Some of us kept the skulls and used them for ink pots, as souvenirs of South African life. From Fort Pine was visible to us Isandlwhana, the scene of the Zulu victory and British massacre. We used to visit also the kraals of the now friendly natives, and buy "maas," a composition something like curds-and-whey and, though rather sour, still very refreshing; also "duala," a native drink made out of Kafir corn crushed and left to ferment in the sun. It was very interesting to note the enormous quantities of "duala" a Zulu could drink, at one draught—three times as much as a white man could. Still more interesting and funny was it to watch the small black children eat mealies,

out of a pot with their hands, and to note the size they gradually swelled to, quite like a balloon, until at last—well, the pot was empty. I often wondered, and so did my comrades, if such black urchins could eat thus, how much an adult native's inside could contain of cooked mealie meal; though I have never found out, for certain, the answer to this proportion sum.

They were a happy lot, these blacks, what with the chiefs, their wives and families. Their wives are bought and sold, and valued from six to ten cows each, according to their looks and other points. The more daughters, therefore, a chief has, the richer he becomes, as each of them goes off his hands. Their ideas, too, of meum and tuum with reference to wives, as well as in respect to other possessions, are very strict; no stealing of other people's property. No divorce laws with them either, and in this they can give their white brothers a lesson, for they punish infidelity with death, also cattle-stealing similarly. It is only the Christianized Kafir, or Hottentot, that breaks their severe

code of honesty, and accordingly makes the worse servant of the two, for, once he becomes semi-civilized he robs, lies, gets drunk and becomes insolent. It was quite the thing among us, if we wanted to keep up any particular event in camp, such as a "birthday" (which came round in a most remarkable way some two or three times to each man in the year), for us to have a spree by hunting up some missionary, the finding of whom "at home" was the sure signal for a "glorious drunk," with our host as chief actor in the festivities. I was rather amused to see, on one of these occasions, the sudden transformation from jollification to gravity upon the unexpected arrival of the Lutheran mission inspector, from home. How sincerely pious and good our missionary friend then looked! also his converted blacks, when they were called into the house to sing before the inspector some Moody and Sankey hymns, just to confirm the inspector's ideas of the benefits morally and physically attainable by so judicious a system of Christianizing

"the poor black heathens" in foreign parts. No wonder the missionary grinned and winked the other eye, directly his religious chief's back was turned, en route to the "faderland" once more, where doubtless the good man's experiences, well told to an admiring and civilized congregation, of sober and fashionable citizens, would result in a further, and a still more generous, response than the previous year's collection in aid of so good an object as the foreign mission fund.

CHAPTER VII.

Dill's Store—"Ant-bear Heaps" and "crab-holes"—Stable Parade—A Wild Young Blood—Stalking our Man—"P. G."—Wordly-Earlmot and Cravensroft—A Burning Anniversary—Esprit de Corps—"Old Jacky"—Grass Fires—The Fight—Swazi and Pondoland Traders—"Down-country"—Around the Camp Fire—"Comrades All"—A Soldier's Supper"—"Sentry-go."

Two or three of us would occasionally get a "pass" on "paydays" for ourselves and horses and ride over to the only store in the district, kept by a man called Dill, and make matters lively, what with drinks, songs and yarns; till our combined exchequer had been spent, and most of the limited stock of liquors drunk, we would race back to camp, our horses avoiding, by a miracle, collision with "ant-bear" heaps or falling into "crab-holes." Of course we had to straighten ourselves up on re-entering the barracks, in time for evening stables, and appear as sober as usual; otherwise the privi-

"ST. JOHN'S RIVER AT THE ENTRANCE TO PONDOLAND."—Page 66.

lege of being allowed a pass out in "mufti" and with our horses would have been stopped. Several men we had were real artists at dissembling on such occasions of having got slightly elevated, and would cause much smothered laughter, while at stable parade, grooming their horses' coats the wrong way up, placing the halter upside down and doing sundry other absurd things, while they were talking to their horses, in an amiably maudlin way, ending by "dismissing" quite the opposite way to the rest of the men. Our non-commissioned officers, as a rule, were very good on these occasions and discreetly overlooked such discrepancies, so long as they were not too glaringly forced upon their notice. We had some very wild fellows among us. One, a well-known general's son, and a clever going fellow, had been expelled from the Military Academy Woolwich through his wildness and drinking habits—a great pity and a sore disappointment to his parents. When not saturated with too much "square-face," or any other drink he

could get hold of, this gay young spark was one of our most agreeable comrades, although certainly his camp appearance was generally of the most negligé kind—a pair of pyjamas tucked in at the ankles into longboots, a tattered and buttonless silk shirt open at the neck and torn half down the back, these two necessary articles of clothing being fastened by a leather belt, with tobacco pouch thereon and pipe fixed in his mouth, completed the "tout ensemble" of a handsome, clever young scamp of a Britsh officer's son, with the Hall brand of a gentleman stamped throughout.

I shall not easily forget how it took the rest of the night guard, and myself, to arrest this wild young beggar after he had taken just enough bad liquor to make him perfectly devilish in his mad tricks. With the mischief and agility of a monkey he had climbed on to the roof of the Fort and there defied us to come and take him to the guard room, a matter easier said than done. Ultimately, the whole of the sentry, leaving their carbines and accoutre-

ments in the guard room and taking off their boots, climbed up and converged from several different points towards him—only to be balked, at the very moment of expected success, by the young beggar, with a wild Turkish battle cry of "Osman Pasha," jumping clean off the top of the buildings on to the "veldt" outside; where, having sprained an ankle, he lay till we found and took him to the guard room for the night. The next day he was fined five shillings and "confined to barracks," or got the C. B., as he put it, for seven days, laughing over it all as a good joke, especially as his swollen ankle required rest and his pay was mortgaged some six months in advance. He had served at Plevna, under Osman Pasha, and took part in the great sortie from there, being taken prisoner by the Russians and released eventually, after which he drifted over to South Africa, where he joined the Natal Mounted Police.

We had another remarkable character of a different stamp, a time-honored (if nothing

more) and hardened veteran in the ways of London city life, a real "hard old case" for any social and temperance reformer, and one who reminded me of the London cabby anecdote of the man who, in his own words, confessed that he only "joined the blue ribbon harmy because people temps me and I halways acceps." In my comrade's case, who was called by his two initials P. G., contrary to the usual nicknaming so prevalent among public schoolboys, military and naval men, he was a walking advertisement of a prematurely senile wreck, and, like Sloper, never seemed to die so long as there was a taste of his favorite "unsweetened" anywhere about. Like the immortal Ally, his appearance too was rather similar, what with a purple-hued nose, a general puffed-out, baggy look, about his face and eyes especially, two whip-sticks of legs and a ludicrously amiable smile. In contrast, however, to all these shortcomings, P. G. was, in other ways, a real smart all-round man, a fair singer and a champion swearer and booser, a good actor and

talented with his pen, or pencil, as a caricaturist. Altogether he was a most amusing comrade, on patrol or elsewhere. P. G. professed to have a great affection for two pals about his own age of some thirty-five years, also well known to the Police as identities in the corps. One of these was named Wordly-Earlmot, and the other Cravensroft, both of whom were P. G.'s rivals in drinking the rest of us well under the table. Whereas P. G. reflected the plebeian element of this curiously assorted trio, in the way of his having been dragged-up by the scruff of his neck, as a half-starved London clerk, of middle class parentage, the other two were of blue blood, one a baronet's son and the other an honorable. Alas! How had the mighty fallen! though, in each of their cases, in spite of the three w's, wine, women and wealth (the latter, to P. G., being temporary and meaning his winnings on cards, horses and share speculations) they were still very smart and amusing relics of a golden youth, misspent. Especially did the wit comeoutas the

wine went in—heavens! how they could talk! talk the "hind leg off a donkey," and then start over again! They used to remind me of a boy's book I once read called "Tom Wildrake's Schooldays," and the three laughable sketches therein named Dabber, Nubbins and Blubs. P. G. and his two pals were, really terrifically funny at times, when keeping up any special occasion, such as the anniversary of the accidental burning to death of P. G.'s old uncle, in whom he had great expectations, but alas, to P. G.'s sorrow, his crackly old relative left his wealth to the hospitals. On such an anniversary P. G. felt particularly "dry," and used to get "blind-oh" on principle; though, prior to reaching so glorious a state, he would amuse his listeners by narrating anecdote after anecdote of his own past life, in London, with its seamy side. Of course each yarn he spun was greatly added to every time we heard it from him, thus verifying the adage of the necessity of liars requiring long memories. One might have, quite easily, filled a fair-sized book with

P. G.'s tales of "mystery and imagination," but of these more anon, leaving them meanwhile to another chapter.

Wordly-Earlmot and Cravensroft were almost equally as good at narration. The former, having been a great sporting card in his day and possessing a splendid memory, could enumerate most of the Derby winners from the start—while Cravensroft was just as strong on actresses and stage matters generally. There were many other funny "characters" in our midst, but the last three stand out as old Natal Mounted Police "institutions."

In fact I often admired our commandant's patience and keen knowledge of such men, who, though not very smart on parade, were the life and soul of the barrack room and patrol camps, and without whom I really believe the esprit de corps would have long ago ceased to exist. Like everything else in the world they had their uses, even if abuses. Such men, though occasionally indulging in a "civil growl" at the "powers that be," are really very

loyal to their corps, and in spite of repeated threats, when in a bad mood caused by a bad head after a night's carouse, to apply for their discharge from "Old Jacky" Dartnell, would rather go through fire and water for him and their corps than leave their dear old tactful commandant, whose popularity is proverbial among them in particular and in Natal generally. As W. Earlmot once put it, "What! leave the corps, old man? Not me! I'm going to live and die in it, if possible. Besides, what the deuce could I do at home now among my people? Why it would be sheer madness for me to think of leaving such a jolly life here; out of sight, out of mind, plenty to eat and drink, and no worry, what more can a man want?"

Promotion never bothered such men; in fact, when they did get advanced from first class trooper to "lance-jack," *i. e.* lance corporal, they would lose their extra stripe through misconduct very soon afterwards, their ambi-

tion not being of the vaulting kind, that would ever "o'erleap itself."

Our up-country station life used to be varied by occasional grass-fires, when "all hands" would turn out, each with a sack, and beat down the flames, till a safe distance had been cleared around the fort. Sometimes, also, the monotony would be lessened by a quarrel breaking out between two of our men, who would, then and there, retire to some quiet spot and fight it out, till all was blue.

Like the rest, I was not an exception in this way and had to stand up for myself on one occasion, and go through " a few rounds" until I had beaten my opponent, an ex-sailor, who happened to interfere and try to bully me, two things I never would stand; hence the row, resulting to myself, even though the victor, in two scars that I carry with me to this day, caused by my upper lip being cut through and my nose half broken.

As a rule we were all too jolly a lot to worry over trifles, preferring to indulge our animal

spirits in good-natured chaff, that taught us to give and take, and was a panacea for the hot-tempered, or oversensitive, individuals among us. Military discipline, together with camp comradeship and barrack room chaff, very soon makes a man of one—especially anyone "cradled in the lap of luxury!"

Sometimes we would come across a camp of traders, returning from Delagoa Bay through Swaziland, en route to Pietermaritzburg to dispose of skins, ivory and gold dust. They were usually very decent fellows and used to welcome us to their camp, most cordially, and join us in songs and yarns, telling us about their sport and adventures met with, in the interior of Afric's dark continent.

We had been here since the fourteenth of October till the nineteenth of April, and were getting rather tired of the sameness of our surroundings, when, to our delight, we received "marching orders" to go to Fort Durnford, at Estcourt, another station less than a week's ride down-country, where, after passing Klip

Spruit, Dundee and Ladysmith, we arrived about the twenty-fifth. We were not sorry for the change, from nothing but the almost endless and shadeless "veldt," to so pretty a little town, with its winding river and hill scenery.

Our march down from Fort Pine was a very pleasant one and quite romantic, what with camping out in "the open" of a dry starry night, songs on the road and around the camp fires, smoking and yarning. One night, though, we did not feel particularly romantic, owing to our wagons containing food and blankets having broken down; hence we had to content ourselves with a soldier's supper, by tightening in our belts and having an extra smoke and a drink of water. Still as the weather was fine and the sunsets lovely, with the nights very clear and starry, and most of us being in good health and spirits, we enjoyed the ride down-country immensely. I must confess, however, that, while doing my share of "sentry-go" at night over the sleepy camp and pacing up and down, in the usual solitary

fashion, with nothing but the starry firmament above and the many weird noises around, to a decided feeling of loneliness and past home memories creeping over me, mixed with wondering thoughts of what my future might be. Such reflections, thank goodness, did not last long, being soon cut short by either some of the horses kicking or else by the loud and very commonplace snores of my sleeping comrades, whom I was guarding.

"OUR CAMP SWEETHEARTS."—Page 79.

Arrival at Estcourt.

CHAPTER VIII.

Arrival at Estcourt—Court Orderly and Jail-guard—De Kaap Gold Rush—Tugela River Outstation Life—In Kafir Huts—"Tambooki" Grass and "Daagering"—Mountain Patrols—"Nature Unadorned"—Camp Sweethearts—Boers and Blacks—Reminiscences of Slavery—Buying Wives—"Intombis-umfans and intombizanes"—"The Happy Nig"—Bartering, Gun Running—Seizing Assegais—Searching Boer Wagons—Watching by Moonlight—"Verdommt Roibagtes."

Our Estcourt quarters were similar to those of Fort Pine, in size and construction, and overlooked the town and river below. The routine of duties was also much the same, stables, parades, horseguards, fatigues, mounted drills, etc. The only extra duties we had, different to those of Fort Pine, were to act as court orderly to the resident magistrate and sentry guard at the jail, also patrolling the town and its canteens nightly. It was about this time that the DeKaap gold fields broke out, and a few of our men deserted and joined the

"rush," but eventually returned, were punished and got taken on again in the corps.

From Estcourt I was drafted off with a detachment of some four others for patrol duty to a camp on the banks of the Little Tugela River. Here we were camped in native huts, under the charge of a corporal, a sporting son of Erin, a "remittance-man" and a gentlemanly "good sort." The renowned P. G. and Worldly-Earlmot were with me on this outstation, and they helped very considerably to enliven the rest of us, especially when the rainy season broke in upon us, and the Tugela coming down "in flood," we were cooped up, for several weary long weeks, in our huts. These latter were made by Kafirs, after their usual fashion, of sticks bent over to cross and recross each other, until the whole formed the shape of a large beehive, the interstices being filled in with clay and "tambooki" grass, plastered on from the outside, which, when dried and hardened by the sun's rays, gave each hut the appearance of a thatched roof. The floor was

then "daagered," or smeared, with fresh cow-dung, which very soon became hard and was a preventive of ants, flies, mosquitoes and other insects. Our work here consisted of two or three of us at a time going out on mounted patrols, visiting the farms, reporting and settling any complaints the settlers might have against the natives and others, in the way of cattle-stealing, boundary disputes and so on. We had to serve summonses, execute warrants, take a census of the inhabitants and see to the payment by the natives of their hut and dog taxes, while inspecting the receipts of those already paid.

This would entail long rides across the "veldt," and through the mountain passes of the Drakensburg, and other mountain ranges, for days and weeks together. At nights we would camp out near some "spruit," or anywhere else where we could find water, or habitations, and "strike camp" early next day, and continue our route, as mapped out before

starting upon it, returning when our work was finished to our home on the Tugela's banks.

Here each man would take his turn at cooking, and stay in camp, while the others, not out on patrol, would put in the time fishing, bathing, shooting smoking, reading and sketching. At the latter our camp artist was P. G., who excelled at it, and would perch himself behind a rock, by the river's side, and taking for his models from life some of the native men or women, who came down periodically to wash, sketched them in the garb of "Nature unadorned." Of some of these Tugela beauties I now have the artist's originals, and quite shock the pious and conservative old folk at home by showing them off as some of my African black sweethearts. The Kafirs, like the Zulus, are a fine race of people in physique, looks and carriage, very proud, brave and hospitable in their dealings with one another, as well as with the white men. The Boers are much disliked by the Zulus and Kafirs, owing to the past and present bad treatment received

at the former's hands. It was to avenge their wrongs that the Zulus, in the first Transvaal war, offered to drive every Dutchman into the sea; and being then still a very powerful and brave nation, and the Boers not so well armed as now, would I believe have done so had we but let them. The Basutos, Swazis, Pondos and other tribes all hate the Boers, for the way the latter shoot the women and raid the cattle of the former and their unjust acts generally. The Hottentots, a most degraded race, on the other hand, dislike but fear their Dutch task masters and are subservient to them, more after the manner of slaves, and as such obey the Boers before they will a Britisher, and therefore are not trusted by the latter.

Most of the Kafirs are essentially a race of graziers, and in times of peace tend their cattle and goats, while growing enough mealies and Kafir corn for their own wants. They are very clever as cattle dealers, such stock being the recognized barter of the country, more or less, especially with them and the Boers. Even

the native wives, or "intombis," are valued at so many head of oxen, according to her particular good qualities, and any youthful aspirant to the hand of a chief's, or other native's daughter, must pay her father the number of cattle that she, as an "intombizane," is valued at, before the lover can carry her off, as his blushing bride. Her value varies from six head of oxen upwards, in proportion to her good looks, figure and domestic virtues generally. The women usually do all the work to be done, such as cultivating corn and mealies, with the hoeing and harvesting of same, milking and feeding the cattle and goats, fetching water and fuel, "daagering" the hut floors, nursing the children and so on. The boys and girls, "umfans" and "intombizanes," help to herd the goats and cattle, and assist their mothers in any other light duties necessary. We found them always a very kind and good-natured people, contented and happy as children, and like these rather prone to beg for anything they fancied, such as blankets, beads, salt, tobacco, and drink.

The last, we were strictly forbidden to supply them with, though, of course, we gave them of the other articles whatever we chose to. As a rule, we used to exchange salt and tobacco for mealies, eggs, milks, "duala" and "maas." One of our duties was to disarm any natives on Natal territory of their *assegais,* also to stop the Dutch and others from running firearms, powder and shot, alias "tea and coffee," and liquor, across the drifts and borders of Natal.

Our authority as Mounted Police—to search Boer and other wagons, suspected by us, was not liked at all, and sometimes nearly led to a slight fracas; in spite of which, however, we insisted upon carrying out our orders, whether the traders liked it or not. We quite enjoyed watching the drifts, on moonlight nights, whenever we got word of any suspicious looking wagon-loads, about to cross. It was rather a dangerous, though exciting task, ordering the Boers and others to unload their wagons, to enable us to search them for guns, liquor, etc., as the driver and his stalwart sons would

glower at us, in a treacherous kind of way, as if they could have put a bullet through us, the "verdommt roebagtes," or "damned redcoats," and would have done so had they dared, only we were too watchful and could beat them at their own games, if necessary.

"ZULU BOYS."—Page 87.

Loyal Dutch.

CHAPTER IX.

Loyal Dutch—Coffee and Concertinas—"Off Saddling and Out-spanning"—The "baas" and "vrow"—Sleeping Accommodation—On the "Stoep" in Ponchos—"Shellback's Dilemma—"Gorrie's Post"—Tinned Horse and Dog—Replenishing our Larder—"Poosa and Pontac"—A Terrible Thirst—Drakensburg Mount and the "Thorns."

OUR visits to the loyal Dutch, and other farmers, were always welcome, and our treatment by them most hospitable. We would be put up for the night, well fed, and entertained with the never failing concertina or accordion, violin or else piano, smoking and talking, preceded by coffee and the usual questions, as to where we had come from, where going and how long we intended staying in the next place, and so on. Visitors find the Dutch hospitality, like their hosts, very heavy. On riding up to a farm and dismounting one is generally asked to off-saddle, and, if near sunset, to put up for the night and sleep, either in

some empty wagon outspanned near the house or else is invited to sleep inside the house, just according to the sort of mood the "baas" and his wife, the "vrow," are in, in which case, if they are sweet tempered, you and your friends are invited to share the same bed with the family. The bed consists, as a rule, of the old-fashioned wooden fourposter, built soon after the Deluge or thereabouts, and into this one and all are expected to turn, clothes and all, with the Dutchman, his wife and family. Even our ideas of morality, as rollicking troopers, were such as to prevent our accepting so kind an invitation, preferring, as we did, to sleep out on the "stoep," or uncovered veranda outside, with our saddles for pillows and blankets and waterproof "ponchos" wrapped around us. In most cases, I found Napoleon's idea, that "women rule the world," to be a correct one—so that the great thing we had to do in our case was to create a good impression on the "vrow," at first sight, after which all was plain sailing—plenty of handshaking, coffee and

"square-face" drinking, feeding, concertina music, telling lies and smoking, being just about the sum total of a night's programme at any Dutchman's house.

A very amusing episode took place at one of the latter, where three others and I had ridden up to in the pouring rain and having off-saddled, were asked to stay the night. One of our men, an ex-sailor, whom we had nicknamed "shellback," owing to his round-shaped back and jack-tarlike appearance, got very lively after imbibing a fair quantity of "square-face," so much so that he was quite the life and soul of the party, drinking, singing and dancing by turns—to the great delight of our worthy Dutch host and family. Among these were three fully grown daughters, with the usual Dutch stolidity, figures and uncouth manners, and as ugly as sin. To these our sailor friend promptly made love, and to such advantage that, as matters got livelier and the singing and drinking were at their height, he had proposed to each of the three "vrouleins," and "mira-

bile dictu" was accepted by one and all. A nice dilemma to be in, and much more so when each of Shellback's fiancées clamored to be married at once! not wishing to lose the golden and possible "only chance of a lifetime in the way of securing a "real live man." As it happened, a travelling Dutch-Church parson was among the guests that night, and, being as drunk as anyone else, married our sailor friend straight off, so we thought, to the three of them,—rather an awkward fix to be in, as the sequel proved. As the three brides became thoroughly muddled as to "who was who," one of the other troopers and I partnered off with two of them in order to relieve their embarrassment. I must say they were very warm-hearted girls, and so fearfully affectionate, that none of us had much to growl about on that score. Thus everything went on as merrily as a marriage bell, the festivities of dancing, gorging, smoking and drinking "square-face" being kept up till breakfast next day, after which we troopers went to the stables to feed our horses.

Loyal Dutch.

While here one of our men, whom we had missed and who spoke Dutch fluently and had managed to snatch a few hour's rest after the wedding, by collapsing in the hayloft, suddenly surprised us by waking up and laughingly congratulated my two other comrades and myself upon the happy marriage we had each made; whereupon, thinking that he was joking, we chaffed him back and asked him how he enjoyed the fun of seeing poor Shellback "spliced;" but, to our horror, he assurred us that the whole three of us were properly married by a Dutch parson, according to Boer customs, etc. Being thoroughly sober by this time and in our right senses we would not admit of such an arrangement being serious, so, thinking that three heads are better than one, cast about for some way out of the difficulty. It was a veritable council of war! By mutual consent we arranged to leave one man to saddle up all our horses, giving the others a signal when they were ready, while the other three, in order to avoid suspicion, returned to our newly-married

wives, who were fast becoming very clamorous at our absence and ready to eat us with kisses and caresses, directly we got back to the house. At length, after a little more eating, drinking, smoking, laughing and loving, we noticed the preconcerted signal, and two of us managed to excuse ourselves, on the plea of bringing in our comrade from the stables for something to eat and drink, being followed soon after by the last man, who, feigning impatience, was supposed to come and hurry us all up. Yes! certainly we all did hurry, but not back to the Boer's family abode. No! but, quite unseen, we made rapid tracks for the open "veldt" and freedom, and did not draw rein till some twenty miles, or more, lay between us and our erstwhile blushing and amorously expectant, newly-married wives.

Needless to say we never patrolled in that neighborhood again, and, to this day, I feel sure we have all most religiously kept our mutual secret from other fair admirers of ourselves. In fact I heard that my two comrades

of this matrimonial escapade got married a few years after. So by this time if the Dutch ceremony holds good they are bona-fide bigamists. So much for wine and women! the effect of which in my case being that I have become a staunch teetotaller, and a confirmed old bachelor ever since! *Sic vitâ!*

Once more returned to camp the cooking was taken in turns by each of us excepting the non-commissioned officer in charge, and it was very amusing at times to see the makeshifts for bread, that was sometimes made of mealie-meal and oatmeal, when flour ran out at the store, some few miles off. This place was called Gorrie's Post, and consisted of a plain wooden four-walled building, with a "lean-to" in front, and a few outhouses nearby, the whole being kept by a very decent Scotchman and his wife.

We used to ride over when necessary, leading over a packhorse, and return loaded with provisions for ourselves, in the way of tins of compressed beef, called by us "tinned horse,"

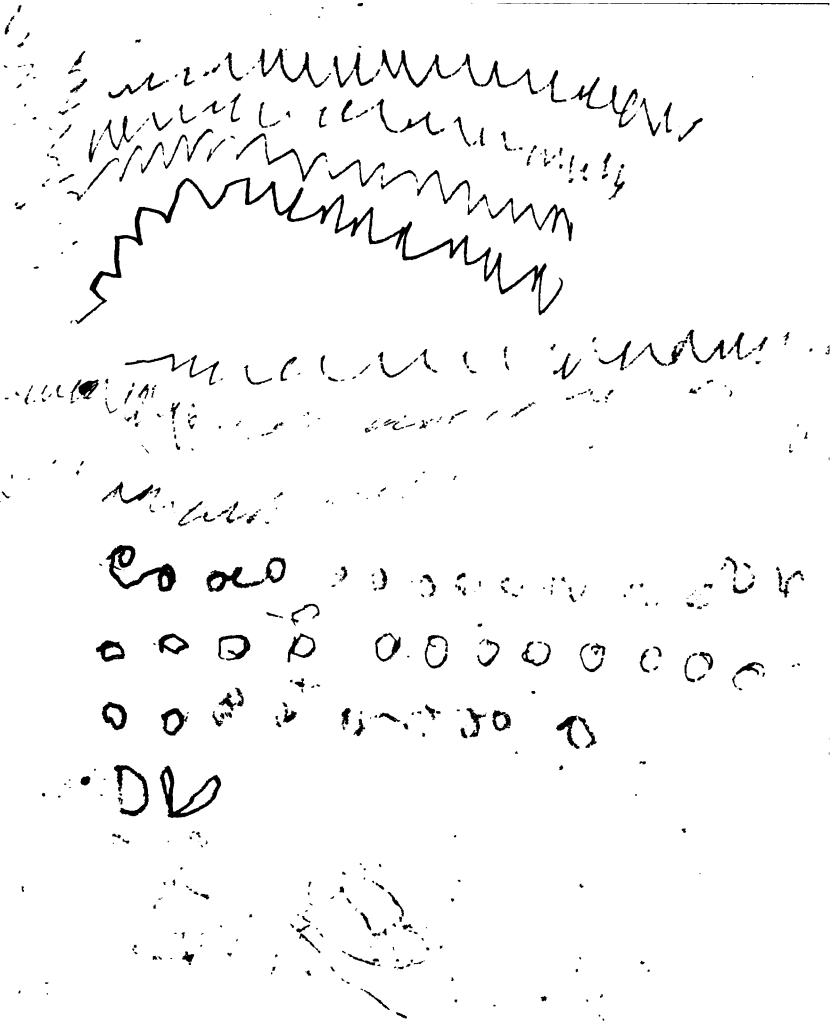
and equalled only by the "tinned dog" of Western Australia for blowing one out; and by its dry and excessively salt flavor caused us usually a terrible thirst. Sometimes we would get half a kid, or half a sheep, whenever our Scotch storekeeper killed; also, by aid of some of our sporting comrades, a few wild pigeons, "pauw," a kind of wild turkey, and any quantity of fish, all of which were "extras" for our larder and relished as such accordingly. The natives would also bring us fowls, fairly often, and bottles of milk, also "Kafir beer," "duala" and "maas," in exchange for our money, tobacco, salt, blankets, old clothes and an occasional "poosa," or drink of "square-face," "pontac" a Cape port wine, or anything else of a fiery nature! So that, taking one thing with another, a policeman's lot was not half such a bad one as one might imagine.

Talking of tinned provisions, I remember well, while on patrol near Ulundi, and when camping out one night on the "veldt," after a hearty supper of compressed salt beef, how

none of us could sleep at all, until first one and then another remarked how fearfully "dry" he was; ultimately we put it to the vote of the majority as to who should go and fetch up the "mess-tins" full of water from the nearest "spruit." As it fell to my lot, I went, and, after filling myself up to the neck with water, brought the other fellows some of it,—being received with expressions of gratitude thus: "Thank Heaven! as my tongue is hanging down to my boots;" "Saved, saved from death by thirst;" "My inside is on fire, old man;" "Dry as a bone;" "Parched as a rat," and so on; then a prolonged silence while their hot throats fizzed and the water gurgled. Verily I deserved a medal from the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, if judged by the way my comrades drank up the welcome water. Of course, the next morning, our camp Rougemont said he had had "an awful dream," something about his being in the middle of a crystal sea in which he was swimming, when suddenly he was attacked by a terrible thirst

that caused him to at once drink up the sea dry. He quite forgot to state whether the latter was salt, or not, so we chaffed him by telling him it must have been a sea of whisky; but quite unabashed he said he was far to dry to tell what it was.

Among other patrols we visited Zeitsman's, Hogben's Store, Wales's, Nelson's and Hopkin's farms, and had some long rides round about the Drakensburg Mountains. The latter are very high and command magnificent views of the surrounding country of Basutoland, and the Orange Free State. The flat land below was very rough to travel over, especially certain bush parts called "the thorns," where it was slow and hot work for the horses to move along, with a blazing sun overhead, and not much water.



"MY CHUM, WORDLY EARLMOT."—Page 97.

The Rains and Swollen Rivers.

CHAPTER X.

The Rains and Swollen Rivers—Shooting the Rapids—Amusing Cooking Accident—"On Leave"—Seriocomic Hotel Adventure—"In Laager"—A Favorite Stew Recipe—"Gipper."

NATAL as a colony, however, has numberless "spruits" and rivers, so is very well watered throughout. Once a year it rains almost continuously for six weeks at a stretch, a terrific downpour that swells mountain rivulets into raging torrents, often in a couple of hours, thereby making it quite impossible for man, or beast, to cross, unless at some very wide, shallow parts. These are called "drifts," and are negotiated by wagons and horsemen when not too full, or swift. All our horses were adepts at swimming rivers, so that we used to cross, even though the fords were deep, by hanging on to our horses' tails, or by the stirrup on the near side of the animal, that is to say, on the

side upon which one usually mounts one's horse. Nothing ever seemed to daunt our men or horses in tackling the difficulties of the colony, and that is where the advantage of colonial troops comes in, both as regards their knowledge of locality and their mounts being hardier and better used to the country than those from elsewhere.

Among our healthy amusements we used to bathe in the Little Tugela, plunging into its clear, cold waters daily, when in camp. "Shooting the rapids" used to be a particularly blissful form of enjoyment for us, and caused us great fun; striding slowly, in Indian file, into the rapids at their commencement until our legs were washed from under each of us in turn, when away we would go into swifter and deeper water, with feet foremost, and heads slightly raised to see where we were going, and hands paddling at our sides—a kind of water toboganning, and quite as exhilarating in its own way. After coming out of the water we would race one another along the bank, "put

the stone," and get dry in a promiscuous sort of way, with the broiling sun to tan us. Many a jolly hour we spent after emerging from our refreshing bath! Laying about at full length on the grass, with nothing much to worry over in the way of clothes, and our towels twisted round our heads, turbanwise, we would smoke, chat gaily and sunburn ourselves *ad lib.* Verily those were the halcyon days of golden youth, and life was well worth living! With not a care, except to kill time in the present, we were indeed a happy-go-lucky, if motley, group of nonchalant dare-devils!

Talking of care, the only time I can really say the whole camp was somewhat akin to such a feeling, was after one of our "new hands" —a real tender young blade, at any rate in such matters as camp-cooking—took his turn at the latter for the first time and gave us a good meal at supper time. It was some concoction he called Irish stew, I believe, with dough-boys thrown in, so he said, in lieu of "murphies." Well! we were all very hungry,

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as usual, and not too particular, so ate heartily of the stew and quaffed hot coffee copiously, after which we talked, sang songs and smoked, "yarned" again and fell asleep. Our slumbers were, alas! far too heavy to last long, for first one and then another awoke and groaned, turned about and growled, twisted round again and cursed audibly, though quietly, exchanged remarks with one another and damned, then got up and went out hurriedly towards the "veldt," and, with nothing but the stars about, studied astronomy and prayed aloud. Personally I never felt so religious before in all my life, and hope I never may again! The next morning we compared notes and found the Kafir, who had watched the "stew" the previous night, had mistaken a tin of baking soda for salt and emptied the lot into the stew-pot. We went for that "beautiful" Kafir, but, alas! he vanished like an ostrich across the open "veldt," and for all we know may still be running across country to this day.

Occasionally our life in Kafir huts on the

banks of the Tugela River would be varied by a couple of us taking it in turns to go into Estcourt, either on duty with despatches to the officer in command there, or else on leave for a few days. The latter generally followed after we had received our month's pay, so that we had a few pounds to enjoy ourselves upon—which we did, in the most approved manner, by either staying wholly at one of the hotels in the township, where we would live well and get plenty of card-playing and billiards, or else by sleeping in barracks up at the fort; a more economical way of doing things. We would visit the town after breakfast, enjoying the day here and get back for a "doss down" in the Police quarters at night. By this last means we were very jolly among the many old comrades we met there. On one occasion, our corporal in charge at the Tugela and I came into Estcourt, and, after reporting ourselves to the inspector at the fort, obtained the necessary leave and leaving our horses there, stopped at a snug hotel down-town, where we played

cards and billiards and made love to all the women, single and married, available for that endearing pastime. Well, about the last night of our stay there, before returning to our Tugela River out-station, we met a number of fellows from the barracks, who were also "on pass" in town, with whom we naturally fraternized, till matters became very lively, what with patriotic, comic and sentimental songs, intermingled with our laughing and drinking like the troopers we all were. Ultimately my comrade and I escorted each other to our room at the hotel, and "turned in" for the night. My room-mate, however, was feeling very ill and asked me to get him some spirits to set him right, though unfortunately the hotel bar was closed for the night—in fact, it was by then the very early hours of morning, about two A. M., so that I was at a loss how to manage to get the liquor required. It was then that I heard voices in the room next to us, and the clinking of glasses, and the latter seeming too good a chance to let slip, I promptly dressed

and going round to my neighbor's door, knocked at it and explained my dilemma, as to my sick friend. A raw-boned woman, of very heavy Dutch appearance, came to the door and at once complied with my request, by retreating into her husband's room, and reappearing with a bottle of brandy in one hand and a tumbler in the other, told me to help myself, which I did by half-filling the glass and handed back the bottle with many thanks; when to my utter astonishment and discomfort, I received a heavy clout from her, across my head, accompanied by a torrent of abuse—though for what earthly reason I am still to this day quite ignorant of, except that she was either mad or drunk; so, as discretion seemed the "better part of valor," I thought I had better get out of her way. This I did, as quickly as possible, midst the virago's tongue-banging—to the effect that she had been grossly insulted and screaming to her husband to come out and go for me. Beating a hasty retreat, I arrived at my room with half the quantity of brandy spilt, and giving

what was left to my comrade, turned to lock the door, against further possible events, but, to my disgust, found that the key would not turn in the lock; hence, still hearing my enraged neighbor's voice, I looked around for some articles of furniture with which to barricade the door, preparatory to being beseiged. While in the act of accomplishing this, my plans were suddenly overthrown by the wretched woman bursting into the room, with a revolver in one hand and a "sjambok," or Dutch whip, in the other—she screaming all the time for her husband to hasten out and catch the "Verdommt Skellum." To add to the confusion the irate woman started blazing away with her revolver at me, which made my wretchedly sick comrade, poor chap, groan out "Oh! Lord!" and dive under his blankets, where he lay as still as a mouse—while I simultaneously dropped on all fours and circumnavigated the room, with a chair for cover from the bullets and "sjambok." Luckily for him and me the woman in her frenzied

state kept her shooting-iron pointed upwards, and in that direction the bullets travelled through the ceiling, instead of through me as intended. I was also in luck's way when my irate female, becoming impatient at her husband's delay and nonappearance, evidently caused by his only having just tumbled out of bed to dress himself, left the room for a few moments, to fetch him herself, thus giving me time for a breather and to rally myself for further defence. I made good use of my time by throwing up hastily-constructed ramparts, in the way of chairs, washstand, etc., and, further, by "laagering" the door with the bedstead dragged up against it; then, quickly opening the window, I looked out and noticing the length of the drop was some few feet from the ground outside, hurried and pushed my half-dazed room-mate out through the window, on to the ledge of which he hung for a moment and then with a groan, as if his last day had come, he dropped all of a heap on to the ground beneath—with myself following suit.

Both of us were only just in the nick of time to avoid the woman who, reinforced by her husband, a gigantic, red-bearded, half-drunk monster in pyjamas, started to hunt round our bedroom for us and demolish the chairs and sundries piled up in their way. To cut short this extraordinary and exciting adventure, my sick comrade and I, after being chased round and round the hotel, clad—well! in nothing much to speak of, managed to throw the irate couple of drunken maniacs off our trail by "trekking across country" to a small out-house upon whose friendly roof we clambered and stayed unperceived, shivering and shaking till daylight; when the cause of the whole disturbance being as fast asleep as two pigs, we cautiously got back to our room, dressed and got down to breakfast, where, safe in the soothing presence of our hotelkeeper and his wife, we poured into their sympathetic and amused ears our harrowing tale of woe. Our worthy host and hostess were both amused and annoyed, and promised to look into the matter

and to speak to the still sleeping couple, directly they appeared on the scene. This they did about "tiffin" time, and they vowed they had never left their rooms all night, and that we, if you please, must have been very drunk, or else dreaming, to have imagined such nonsense. "Great Scott!" we muttered, "what beautiful liars some people are!" though we said no more, being rather glad, on the whole, that the affair, in its ridiculous aspect, had blown over so quietly. More especially did we become more and more pacified towards our quondam persecutors, whom we felt sure in their sober senses were conscience-struck at their erratic behavior—when they made amends by plying us both with drinks *ad lib,* and toasted our healths frequently. The previous night's scene was worth a good reporter, and a snap-shot, and was really very funny after all,—at least we thought so afterwards!

We got back to our Tugela quarters that night, laden with the usual odds and ends of tobacco, cigarettes, books, etc., for our camp

comrades there; and much to our satisfaction, as we were very hungry after our twenty-mile ride, the camp cook regaled us with our favorite stew, composed of goat's meat, "bronze wing" pigeons, quail and "pauw"—a mixture that makes a most tasty dish; the "gipper," or gravy, of which needs no sauce, being in itself, as is generally the case where flavored with most wild birds, very delicious.

"A BUCK HUNT; OR, RESULTS OF THE CHASE."—Page 109.

Tugela Amusements.

CHAPTER XI.

Tugela Amusements—The "Donga" Pigeon-coup—A Buck Hunt—"Pauw" Shooting—Boer Marksmen—Sjamboks—A Black Queen—Vaccinating the Blacks—A Midnight Race and its Results—A Zulu "Beer Drink" and Wedding—Knobkerry Fight—Man *versus* Horse.

As the next day was a Saturday, and rather late in the week to send off a fresh patrol, we spent it in various ways, each according to his bent, sketching, bathing, fishing and shooting. At this last our "non-com" in charge, a very jolly North of Ireland man, and a rattling fine all-round sport, was about our best shot, and while we were out together once I saw him bag some seventeen wild pigeons at one shot. The way it was done was by creeping up unperceived along a small "donga," or dry bed of a river, and on the top of one of its banks he levelled his gun, loaded with a cartridge of small shot, at a clump of pigeons, feeding some

twenty yards off, thus legging and winging almost the whole lot—a real slaughtering pot-shot, and no mistake about it. "Pauw" shooting required keen sight, as the birds are the color of the half-dried grass, and laying very close at the least surprise are often walked over quite unseen. Snipe again, through flying zigzag, are rather hard to bring down; but quail, which are very quick fliers, are easy enough to a rapid straight shooter.

Buck-hunting was, however, the best sport of the lot, and very excited did I feel the first time I wounded one in its hind leg—so much so that I followed it up for miles, thinking, by its often stopping and looking back at me, I must easily overtake it, but it got away at last amidst the stones and rocks of a "kopje"—much to my disgust, as I had rather fancied myself as a "long-distance man" and ran after it for some ten miles, thus proving how slow the best of us are, in comparison with even a lame quadruped. The Boer farmers are very fair marksmen at deer—or at any moving ob-

jects up to three hundred and fifty yards—but further than this are very commonplace shots. In fact, as compared with our colonials and other sporting Britishers, are not nearly so good, although I have heard that the old Boers much excel their present descendants at judging distance on the "veldt," when firing at buck, which they seldom missed, even at very long ranges. The present generation of Dutchmen in Africa are fast becoming more nervous, and less keen as sportsmen, what with drink and lazy habits. In the early days of the great Boer Trek each Boer youngster, on pain of being "sjamboked," had to account for a kill to each cartridge fired, and so became first-rate shots at deer, that were much more plentiful then, than now.

On some occasions we would visit the native "kraals" in the vicinity, in order to pick up their language, manner and customs; also, to sketch them in their savage surroundings. One tribe near us was ruled by a queen regent, who used to call upon us with several of her

relatives and retinue, and a terrible begging crowd they were too—taking a fancy to all they saw, in the way of tobacco, matches, salt, blankets and so on; and, although they never actually stole, if once you lent them anything to look at, would, like our own white brethren, forget to return it. Taken altogether, they were a happy crowd, laughing, singing, cattle rearing and beer drinking most of their time. Among other visitors we had the district vaccinator and his assistants, who made our camp their headquarters for some time, while vaccinating the natives in our particular part of the colony. The black poulation in hundreds came over to our huts, and squatted about outside, all of them taking their turn at the white medicine-men's hands, going through the operation in the best of humor and unflinchingly as to pain. It is wonderful what physical discomfort these black races could bear, also the extremes of cold and heat—doubtless their very fortitude in most cases was due to the thickness of their skins in a great measure.

Tugela Amusements.

Very early in the mornings the atmosphere in South Africa is damp and chilly, owing to the dews that fall in the tropics being usually heavier than in the colder regions. The winds, rains, lightning and thunder are also far more pronounced, though they do not last so long as in the more northern parts of the globe. The rains were very heavy and the thunderstorms terrific, with the lightning one prolonged blaze, not to be exceeded elsewhere by anything those of us who were well travelled had ever seen before.

During the rainy season we used to stay inside our huts, that were fairly waterproof, and supplying ourselves with plenty of blankets, food, tobacco, and literature of an exciting nature, would just be as jolly as possible and weather out the elements the best way we could—as it was quite useless, and positively dangerous, to go patrolling and knocking up ourselves and horses, while getting half-drowned swimming the many swift and swollen streams and rivers. One night I remember, in

particular, after being cooped up for a whole week in our Kafir huts, without a decent break in the incessant rains, our provisions were running short and especially our stock of "square-face"; so someone suggested that we should all ride barebacked, in pyjamas only, to Gorrie's store and canteen, across the Little Tugela River, in spite of wind and weather, and once there to have a real jollification and get warmed through with plenty of liquor, getting back to camp well stocked with the required provisions. Well, we were all quite agreeable on the point and, moreover, to lend some life to our trip, we agreed to make a mutally-timed start-off from camp and race to the store—the last one to arrive there having "to stand drinks round." We therefore bridled our horses, mounted and, all getting away to a very good start, raced down to the drift and plunged our horses into the river, so deepened by the heavy rains that it took our horses all they knew to swim across, with each of its riders hanging on to its tail. Once over, the race continued until

Gorrie's store was reached, where we tied up our panting, perspiring and drenched steeds in the stables there and gave them each a couple of bundles of forage. We all got into the canteen and store, looking like half-drowned rats, what with the rain and the river having made our thin "panjams" just about skin tight. Nevertheless, we broached the "very best" our worthy storekeeper had; the first "round" of drinks was "shouted" for by me, as being the last arrival in the race. Well, round followed round, rather too quickly for some of us to last long at the pace—consequently, we one and all, began to get excited, talkative and uproarious, according to the effect the sundry liquors swallowed had upon each of us. We sang, and danced, roared and fell about the canteen, as jolly and stupid as possible, just as if our lives depended upon banishing all thoughts of the warring elements outside. Our host, too, was a real good sort, and with infinite tact, quite entered into the spirit of the thing, in more ways than one—and sang and danced with the

best of us, until the liquor, even to green ginger brandy, having been completely absorbed by our sponge-like insides, we wound up with a "finale," before parting from our jovial Scotch host, by following up "God Save the Queen" and others of the cheerful, patriotic ditties usually sung on such occasions with the whole company trying to dance the Highland fling, plus an Irish jig, to the tune and yelling of "Auld Lang Syne." Then we swaggered to our horses, on to whose backs we succeeded in placing ourselves after various desperate trials. It was truly Shakespeare revived, as to the "vaulting ambition that o'erleaps itself and falls on the other" with us, though we fell mostly on the other side,—the off side, very much so! Once mounted, our brave little band of six started on the return journey to camp—but as to how and when we reached there it is a mystery to this day, and even among the friendly natives in that district it is treasured up as legendary lore of the white man. All I knew, to the best of my belief—I never did

have, even as a boy, an extra good memory—was that one man and I, while racing neck and neck towards the drift, as we thought, felt our horses suddenly stop dead and then—speaking for myself only,—I experienced a light, airy, fly-away sensation of soaring aloft, then back to earth once more with a bump, and all was oblivion—yes! happy oblivion! My comrade, the Honorable ——, told me, next day when I had sufficiently recovered, that the last he saw of me was my turning round and round, like a St. Catherine's wheel, in the air, just prior to his being shot over his own horse's head into the river, which ducking he said quite sobered him, and was the reason that he was the only one to keep his head at all on reaching camp. The rest of our merry little band were picked up, one by one, and brought into camp, by good-natured Kafirs, and our horses ultimately caught and led in next day by Kafirs also, the latter being, of course, well rewarded by us for so doing.

Talking of the next day—oh! what a differ-

ence in the morning—what heads, bumps and bruises, and awful thirst we each had; and after quenching this by tasting "a hair of the dog that bit us," what teetotal vows we one and all did make!

Anyhow, we did not venture across the river until the rains and floods had subsided, and then we were only very moderate drinkers until—well! I suppose the truth must be told—the next auspicious occasion, the date of which my memory once more fails me somehow! I must not omit to mention the many Kafir "beer-drinking" and marriage ceremonies we used to ride over and watch, also the occasional "knobkerry" fights between the natives, who had met to settle their quarrels. One poor black fellow had his skull split clean open and, although his brains were plainly visible, he lived for some nine days before "pegging out." These "knobkerries" are fire-hardened sticks, made of native wood, with heavy knobs about the size of a cricket ball at one end and capable in strong hands of inflicting a terrific

blow—heavy enough to stun an ox easily or even kill it sometimes.

The Kafirs and other tribes also fight with plain sticks and a cowhide shield, held in the left hand to ward off their opponent's blows—and very quick and clever at "guard" and "attack" they are too, as active as cats, and spring at times some four to five feet into the air to avoid a cut, especially across the legs. They are magnificent specimens of physique, as a rule, and the Zulus, Basutos and Kafirs average about five feet ten inches, are well modelled, and as for endurance can run one hundred miles a day, for a week at a time, and tire a horse out completely; in short, are one and all as hard as nails and thorough all-round athletes.

CHAPTER XII.

My Accident—Romance of Love—Striking Camp—The Trysting Place—Course of True Love Seldom Runs Smooth.

BEFORE leaving the scenes of our Tugela River encampment, with its pleasant surroundings and the ever happy Kafirs, I must not forget to relate my first romantic love affair. How funny it is that even real life can be at times so romantic, especially during the period of golden youth "when the heart is young," when certainly "truth is stranger than fiction." I was then only twenty-one years of age, and unlike most youngsters had not yet thought of that evanescent element called "love"—though I verily believe I had a touch of it before leaving the Gourton district of the Tugela River. It happened thus: While approaching one night on patrol, about sunset, a pleasant English-looking farm, I saw several

"A KAFIR WEDDING," WITH POLICE IN THE BACKGROUND.—Page 120.

women standing on the "stoep," or stone ledge in front of the house, evidently watching and wondering as to who I was, and, in my youthful way, I thought I would show off a bit by trying to jump my horse over the gate-panel that blocked my way through an avenue of gum-trees leading straight up to the house. My horse being rather tired or else lazy, went at the obstacle without sufficient spring to clear it—but, hitting it instead, tripped and came down on the other side, sending me on to my head and completely stunning me. On coming to my senses again I found myself, to my surprise, in a comfortable bedroom—midst the untold luxuries of clean sheets and pillows, quite like "home, sweet home!" and an English look about everything, so different to the usual dirty Boer farmer's abodes, met with in Natal and elsewhere in South Africa. While trying to recall how I got there, I detected the rustling of skirts at the slightly open door, followed by the entrance of a remarkably pretty girl of about nineteen years of age, who at

once came up to my bedside and seeing my eyes open, bent over me and asked if I felt better, and if my head ached and would I like a drink; to which I confusedly muttered "Yes! No! Yes!" and tried nervously to thank her—at which she smiled, fetched the drink, kissed me and ran away. After this we soon exchanged confidences, in the way of telling each other our Christian names—her's being Isabel; a very pretty name I thought at the time, and she seemed to think mine was also. Such treatment was very pleasant, and added so materially to my speedy recovery that I was up and about within a week, though meanwhile I had received a visit from the non-commissioned officer, in charge at the Tugela, who, on seeing me in such good nursing hands, was considerate enough to leave me thus, and advised me not to hurry back, till quite well and strong again. Needless to say that I was not averse to such good advice, and availed myself of my host's hospitality to the full extent. In fact, the worthy couple, a wealthy Scotch

farmer and his wife, seemed to have taken quite a fancy to me, also their pretty daughter, whose accepted fiancé I had now become. However, everything comes to an end at last and, the time for my departure being imminent, I agreed with Isabel to ask her parent's consent to our engagement, with a view to matrimony in the near future. Alas! It was very much the latter when the girl's father asked me bluntly how I intended to keep his daughter—had I any financial means of supporting her besides my trooper's pay, or in the event of my leaving the colonial service? and if not, what could I do?—could I farm? rear cattle or what? and, upon my looking abashed and suggesting that I had good prospects, he merely laughed at me, at which I became angry, and gave him my ideas of "blue-blood" as being a fair exchange for his present support of his daughter and myself. He then got very excited, telling me I was a young fool to consider the idea of marrying his daughter until I had the means to keep her, or else owned a

well-stocked farm, which he would manage for me until I could do so myself—otherwise we could not live on love. He also requested me to abandon all ideas of seeing his daughter again under present circumstances, to which request I did not reply, feeling more inclined to swear than anything else. Then with his wife he bade me good bye and, as of course there was nothing more to do than to take the hint and go, I thanked the couple for their hospitality and left the house much depressed, though not before seeing Isabel, who, while my horse was being saddled up, met me in the orchard nearby, and learnt the result of my interview with her people and also bade me adieu. She was very melancholy on hearing everything, but did not despair, and promised to meet me two days after at a certain rendezvous, midway between her home and the Tugela encampment. Poor Isabel left me with tears in her eyes, and mine were not too dry either, though both of us were somewhat comforted at the thought of our next meeting.

My Accident.

In silence I rode back to camp, feeling very glum, but soon recovered my ordinary spirits midst the welcome and lively banter of my rollicking companions, the latter chaffing me of course unmercifully as to their having heard of my being enamored of a lovely damsel, and so forth. Among other topics I heard, to my dismay, that orders had been received for us all to return, in two days, to Estcourt, in order to make room for another detachment to be stationed at the Tugela.

Hence I set about getting my saddlery and equipment cleaned up and put together, in anticipation of my having a day off to enable me to keep my engagement, at the appointed trysting place with Isabel as promised. Poor girl! she was quite heartbroken at the idea of my leaving the neighborhood, more especially as her father was still against my love suit. The only thing we could do, therefore, was to reiterate our vows of love, and exchange locks of hair and promise to write and send each other a photograph; but alas! I never got one

of her at all, although ultimately I sent her mine, when thousands of miles separated us. I shall never forget how sadly we parted, and her prophetic idea that we would not meet again; in spite of my trying to cheer her up to the contrary. However we kissed for the last time and parted, waving to one another from the backs of our horses, as they walked off with us in opposite directions. What a pity that a mutual first love, even though it be called a boy and girl fancy, is so seldom consummated; for surely such, being so pure and natural, was never meant to be nipped so ruthlessly in the bud and stamped out by the stern dictates of parents and guardians, in order, usually, to give place to a "marriage of convenience" and, in most cases. its attendant lifelong unhappiness! With such thoughts, and my ever companionable horse and pipe for solace, I reached camp, and next day, to my great chagrin, I left the dear old Tugela River scenes and life behind me, en route to Estcourt, where we arrived at dusk and reported ourselves to Captain Fairlie, the commanding officer there.

Apply for My Discharge.

CHAPTER XIII.

Apply for my Discharge—Star Troupe Minstrels—Police *versus* Civilians at Tennis—Sell my Horse and Kit—Back to Port Natal—Meet old Comrades—Away to India's Coral Strands.

THE usual routine of barrack life awaited me at Estcourt, in the way of fatigues, drills, parades, on foot and mounted, horse and jail guards, sentry-go and court-orderly duties—all of which became very monotonous after my late free and easy life, on the out-station. It was at this period that I received an offer, through my father's influence, of a billet in India, in a large cotton merchant's office, at a fair salary and with good prospects; a chance of bettering myself that I was prompt to accept. Doubtless, too, the unsatisfactory issue of my late love affair had much to do with my desire to get away from old scenes, and seek fresh fields and pastures new.

Accordingly I lost no time in sending in an

application to headquarters for my discharge—a matter that meant some few weeks to obtain—for, on receiving a satisfactory reply from the commandant, it would necessitate my riding to Pietermaritzburg and reporting myself there. Meanwhile as there was some talk of getting up a minstrel troupe for the corps and, having shown myself fond of theatricals on several previous occasions, I threw myself into the matter in my spare time and organized a very fair crowd of amateur minstrels, calling them the Star Troupe—who very quickly were able to produce a creditable variety performance in the town hall, much to the amusement of ourselves and the worthy townsfolk, and the neighboring farmers and families. We charged nominal prices, all round, and, as the performance was not in aid of the proverbial charities, the profits of our first venture were sufficient to provide a real good supper and a jollification all round. With three others I was also chosen to complete a tennis four to play against a similar number picked from

the Estcourt civilians in several matches, most of which we won easily. Thus the time passed pleasantly and quickly, until I received orders to report myself as soon as possible at the Police headquarters. Consequently, after receiving certain despatches for the commandant from Captain Fairlie, the Estcourt commanding officer, I took leave of my jolly lot of comrades, and rode out of the fort, midst their hearty cheers and good wishes.

The ride to Pietermaritzburg was an uneventful one, merely a long hot road with a wayside inn, here and there, where I halted and refreshed myself and horse, and rested during the hottest time of the day. It took me a couple of days to reach my destination, at which, upon my arrival, I reported myself forthwith, and handed in my despatches for the commandant. The next day I sold my horse and kit, which fetched me about £35, and, having received my discharge marked "very good," the highest character one can get in the ordinary way such things go, I bid

farewell finally all round, and left the old corps for Durban by rail, and from thence by boat bound for India's coral strand.

While waiting in Durban for my steamer, a Clan liner, I met several other discharged comrades, some of whom tried to persuade me to go to Zanzibar, trading from there into the interior, while a few others had great ideas of trying their luck in the unexplored wilds of Madagascar, but I stuck to my original plans, preferring the certainty of a billet already awaiting me to any off chances. As my steamer, bound for Bombay, was to leave port in a couple of days, I got aboard with my baggage in good time, and, once more dressed in "mufti," began to feel myself the ordinary civilian again, as I leaned over the vessel's side and watched old Afric's fast receding shores, midst many conflicting emotions of sadness at leaving the past jolly life behind me, though hopeful, as youth generally is, of the fresh scenes and new life before me.

THE END.

OCT 5 1951